

**Department of State  
U.S. Embassy Cotonou**

**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – 2023-001**

**Federal Awarding Agency name:** Political and Economic Section, U.S. Embassy Cotonou,  
Department of State  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** U.S. Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund (SSH)  
**Announcement Type:** Grant  
**Funding Opportunity Number:** 2023-001  
**Opening of Submission:** April 17, 2023  
**Deadline for Submission:** June 19, 2023, at 23:59 Cotonou time.  
**CFDA Number:** 19.220  
**Total Amount Available:** \$TBD (subject to funds availability)  
**Number of Awards Anticipated:** 6-10 awards.  
**Anticipated Award Amount:** The award floor is set at \$3,000. The award ceiling is set at \$10,000.

**Key Dates:**

1. Applications must be submitted no later than  
**June 19, 2023, at 23:59 Cotonou time.**
2. Questions must be submitted no later than  
**June 1, 2023, at 23:59 Cotonou time.**
3. Notification of project selection, approval, and award signing is expected by **September 2023.**

**Anticipated Award Period:** 12 months or less  
**Anticipated Start Date:** October 1, 2023  
**Anticipated Completion Date:** September 30, 2024  
**Orientation Session:** Interested parties are invited to a **Facebook Live session on May 10th, 2023, at 12:00AM** Cotonou time for additional information. Follow this link please:  
<https://www.facebook.com/usembassybenin>  
**Eligibility Category:** Benin-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, please join our Facebook Live applicant orientation session and refer to links provided in this solicitation. For specific questions regarding requirements, please contact Jose de Souza by email: [desouzajl@state.gov](mailto:desouzajl@state.gov)

U.S. Embassy Cotonou is pleased to announce an open competition for organizations to apply for U.S. Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund (SSH) until **June 19, 2023, at 23:59**. Detailed description of SSH grants and guidelines are below. Please read carefully to see if your project is eligible. If yes, please consider submitting application package, in English and note that incomplete application packages will not be considered. **Only English language applications will be considered.**

### **Program Description and Objective**

The SSH program is aimed at assisting Beninese community groups to develop lasting, self-sustaining projects that significantly impact communities by addressing critical health, social, and development concerns. Each year, Embassy Cotonou supports approximately six to ten projects with small grants, typically under \$5,000. These grants have contributed to agricultural modernization, women's empowerment, improving sanitation, improving learning conditions, and providing greater access to clean water, health services, and education.

### **Eligibility**

SSH projects are for community-based groups or organizations, initiated locally, and administered at the local level. To qualify for an SSH Fund grant, **projects must involve significant community contribution in the form of funding, materials, and/or labor.** Applicants must have the ability to manage SSH projects independently and complete their project within twelve months of signing an SSH agreement.

Consideration will be given to projects with the following qualities:

- Foster community self-reliance.
- Have significant community participation and contributions - volunteer time and labor, donated land, equipment, and/or materials.
- Deliver measurable results (e.g., show how activities led to positive changes within the community).
- Help improve basic economic, social, and/or health conditions at the local community or village level.
- Fall within the ability of the local community to implement and maintain into the future.
- Respect environmental norms for small projects and will not adversely affect protected or other sensitive environmental areas nor jeopardize threatened or endangered species and their habitat.
- Can be completed within one year; and
- Are viable and sustainable in terms of finance, support, and necessary expertise and services.

### **Some examples of what SSH has been used for:**

- Water Projects – boreholes, irrigation, or water collection systems, storage tanks, fishponds.
- Hygiene and Sanitation Projects – pit latrines at schools and clinics; training on health and nutritional best practices; disease screening and vaccinations.
- Environmental Projects – energy-saving, recycling, organic fertilization production, and environmental protection projects; solar panels.
- Income Generating Projects – weaving looms; carpentry tools; brick-making machinery; equipment to produce fortified flour, rice, or palm oil.
- Education Projects – vocational training; nursery school supplies; school furniture or laboratory equipment; community libraries; bilingual books.

**SSH cannot be used for:**

- Start-up projects
- Vehicles
- Property purchases
- Individual or single-family projects
- Reproductive health and family planning programming
- Government offices, military, or prisons
- Projects with political or religious objectives
- School tuition or exam fees
- Operating costs such as rent, salaries, etc.
- Musical instruments
- Advocacy or research projects
- Pesticides, Fungicides, and herbicides
- Human Rights-Related Activities
- Religious Activities
- Credit/revolving loan/micro-financing programs
- Salaries.

**Requirements BEFORE Applying:**

Any entity wishing to apply for a grant with the U.S. Government needs to satisfy certain requirements before applying. Registration at several different sites is necessary to be able to use [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications. The entire registration process can require up to four weeks for the registration to be validated and confirmed.

- ☐ To apply for an NCAGE number, please visit the following link <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>
- ☐ To apply for a Unique Entity Identifier (UIE), please visit the following link <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>
- ☐ For the registration with SAM please visit the following link <https://www.sam.gov>
- ☐ For registration as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) please visit the following link <https://apply07.grants.gov/apply/OrcRegister>
- ☐ For questions relating to registration on Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or email them at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Please note that the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou is unable to assist with technical questions or problems applicants experience with Grants.gov or SAM registrations. Please refer to the contact information for these organizations/processes listed in this NOFO.

## **Application Process**

Every application for funding must include the following documents in English:

- A completed statement of interest which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/SOIus2023>
- Completed:
  - SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)
  - SF-424A (Budget)
  - SF-424B (Assurance)
  - The SF-424 forms can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-mandatory-family.html#sortby=1>.
- Organizational charter or mission statement.
- Organizational chart, including committee/board member names and contact information (reliable phone numbers and email addresses).
- A complete and detailed budget (in U.S. dollars). Include three pro forma invoices for all major items listed in the budget.
- A detailed work plan (schedule of activities over one year).
- Registration Certificate (« *Récépissé de déclaration d'association* » or « *Extrait du Journal Officiel* »).
- One letter of support from a relevant local official.
- Site map, detailed directions to group's office and activity location from nearest large town.
- Clear description of your group's contribution to the project (cash, labor, materials).
- Business plan, if applicable (for income-generating activities).
- Value Added Tax (VAT) exemption certificate, if applicable.
- Land title/authorization of land usage, if applicable.
- U.S. Embassy grant money can't be used to pay for Value Added Tax (VAT) on purchases. If your organization is VAT Exempted, please provide the VAT exemption certificate. If your organization is not VAT Exempted, please explain how your organization will pay for the VAT on purchased items through this grant.
- Please ensure all documents are in **English** and all budgets are in **U.S. dollars**.

Applicants must have an electronic bank account before U.S. Embassy Cotonou can make an award to an applicant. Organizations must provide electronic funds transfer information for the recipient entity (name of bank, account name, account number and type of account). This cannot be the personal bank information of any individual representative. Banque de l'habitat, BSIC, and CLCAM accounts are not accepted.

Please note that application forms and materials will not be returned. Please keep a copy of your application for the group's records. Do not send original documents which you need returned (for example a certificate of registration).

### **Submission Period**

The deadline for applications is **June 19, 2023**. *Incomplete application packages will not be considered for funding.*

### **Selection Process**

A review committee will meet in **August 2023** to determine selected projects using pre-established criteria to assess the merit of each proposal, which include the following:

- Alignment with SSH program eligibility
- Feasibility of project design
- Impact on target group
- Organizational capacity
- Sustainability/financial self-reliance
- Past performance
- Alignment with Embassy Cotonou's mission objectives to support Beninese access to health services, education, and adequate nutrition; promote gender equity; and promote entrepreneurship, especially among girls, women, and marginalized groups, to enable everyone to contribute productively to society and a healthy environment.

If selected, your group will be notified in **September 2023** and representatives from your group will be invited to attend a workshop, sign an agreement contract, and participate in an awards ceremony in September 2023. Funds will be available three or four weeks after submission of advance request. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified late October 2023.

For consideration, please email *complete application package in English* to [CotonouGrants@state.gov](mailto:CotonouGrants@state.gov)

### **Questions**

Potential applicants may contact Human Rights Assistant/Small Grants Coordinator José de Souza, ([desouzajl@state.gov](mailto:desouzajl@state.gov)) at [CotonouGrants@state.gov](mailto:CotonouGrants@state.gov) with specific questions regarding requirements. Please email both addresses to ensure a prompt reply. Please note that José de Souza's roles do not include giving detailed, step-by-step guidance to meet these requirements. Rather he can clarify what are the requirements that apply to all interested organizations.